GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS

Published Weekly by

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

(The National Geographic Society is a scientific and educational Society, wholly altruistic, incorporated under the Federal law as a non-commercial institution for the increase of geographic knowledge and its popular diffusion.)

General Headquarters, Washington, D. C.

Contents for Week of March 23, 1931. Vol. X. No. 5

1. The Virgin Islands: A New American Holiday-land.
2. Discoveries in Ur Help Verify the Book of Daniel.
3. Man Wins a Battle with Insects.
4. Byrd Thanks Schools and Tells of New Work.
5. Clipperton Rock: France's Newest American Possession.

© *National Geographic Society*

IN THE LAND OF DANIEL AND THE LIONS' DEN!

The site of ancient Ur is about 140 miles south of Babylon, in the present-day Kingdom of Iraq. The station shown above is about two miles from the ruins of Ur (See Bulletin No. 2).

HOW TEACHERS MAY OBTAIN THE BULLETINS

The Geographic News Bulletins are published weekly throughout the school year (thirty issues) and will be mailed to teachers for one year upon receipt of 25 cents (in stamps or money order). Entered as second-class matter, January 27, 1922, at the Post Office at Washington, D. C., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized February 9, 1922.

GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETIN

Published Weekly by

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

(Founded in 1888 for the Increase and Diffusion of Geographic Knowledge)

General Headquarters, Washington, D. C.

The Virgin Islands: A New American Holiday-land

EARLY this year the Virgin Islands, America's West Indian possessions east of Porto Rico, were transferred from naval to civil rule. One of the first proposals of the new governor was to construct winter resorts for American and European visitors on St. Thomas and St. Croix, two of the principal islands.

The islands' climate is pleasant the year round, and the beauty of the islands is unsurpassed in the whole sweep of the Windward group. Of St. Croix one writer says, "Its wooded hills, cultivated valleys and magnificent roads, lined on either side for miles by beautiful coconut and mountain cabbage palms, all help to justify its claim to the title 'The Garden of the West Indies!'"

The inhabitants of the Virgin Islands, one of the smallest patches of overseas territory owned by the United States, spent their first nine years under the Stars and Stripes as neither citizens nor aliens. In fact, they were rather curious to know just what their status was. In 1927 they were made full-fledged citizens by act of Congress.

English Spoken under Danish Rule

There are surprises in store for Americans who casually visit these islands without knowing their history. Although Denmark owned the isles for two and a half centuries, from 1666 to 1917, Danish was never spoken extensively. English was used by the natives from the very first; so Uncle Sam had no foreign language problem on his hands when he took over the new territory.

But he has had other problems. Danish money is still in circulation. Danish laws and tropical customs were in force, and it has not always been easy to change those that seemed to need changing. For example, only males could vote in the islands, and only those males who had a certain income.

Then there is the little matter of marriage customs. More than 38 per cent of the marriages in the islands, when a census was taken in 1917, were found to be entirely unofficial and without benefit of clergy. In some parts of the island of St. Croix the percentage was approximately 50.

The population is almost wholly Negro. Nearly 75 per cent of the inhabitants are black, over 17 per cent of mixed blood, and only a little over 7 per cent white.

Three Main Islands

The territory is officially known as "The Virgin Islands of the United States," and consists of three main islands, St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix, and half a hundred or more islets, most of them uninhabited. The three main islands have a total area of 132 square miles. St. Thomas, second in size, lies about 40 miles east of Porto Rico. St. John, the smallest, is separated from St. Thomas by a channel only two miles wide. St. Croix lies 42 miles farther south, and geographically is really not a part of the Virgin Islands.

St. Thomas has one of the best harbors in the West Indies. Ships drawing 31 feet may dock at its wharves. On the hills sloping up from the harbor is the largest town in the new American possessions. It is now called St. Thomas, but under the Danish régime it was Charlotte Amelia.

© Photograph by Capt. A. W. Stevens

ST. THOMAS, VIRGIN ISLANDS, HAS ONE OF THE FINEST HARBORS IN THE WEST INDIES

High hills shut in the capital of this small island domain which Uncle Sam purchased from Denmark in 1917. But these hills have more than once shielded the city from ruin by violent hurricanes. In one storm, September 13, 1928, the wind velocity in the Virgin Islands was estimated at 130 miles an hour. Most of the year, however, the Virgin Islands enjoy a splendid climate, tempered by gentle sea breezes (See Bulletin No. 1).

GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETIN

Published Weekly by

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

(Founded in 1888 for the Increase and Diffusion of Geographic Knowledge)

General Headquarters, Washington, D. C.

Discoveries in Ur Help Verify the Book of Daniel

STARTLING new discoveries in Asia by an expedition which is excavating the ancient glories of Ur of the Chaldees, are said to verify many things mentioned in the Book of Daniel that have, until now, lacked scientific confirmation. The discoveries help confirm the story of King Belshazzar of Babylon, his famous feast, and that of Daniel and the lions' den.

On a Plain Built Up from the Sea

Ur lies hard by the banks of the Euphrates, in the southern half of the broad plain formed by the deposited silt of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. South Mesopotamia is of comparatively recent formation. It is a land reclaimed from the sea by the fertile mud deposit of these, the two great rivers of antiquity.

About 8,000 years ago, as scientists surmise, the waters of the Persian Gulf had receded far enough to allow the neighboring desert dwellers to enter the country and reap the profits of cultivation.

The first chapter of the first book in the Bible tells about this. "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear. . . . And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit. . . ." The whole picture is written from the point of view of the man who has watched the gradual recovery of a rich land from the sea, and the change from marsh to field.

One of the World's First Cities

The oldest traditions, too, assure us that Ur was among the first of the cities founded in the land; indeed, according to the Babylonian tradition, Ur came into being not long after the Creation, and by creation was meant the creation of Babylonia. Furthermore, Ur was the first city to boast an empire after the Great Flood.

The change which caused Ur to evolve from a hamlet to a rich city, second to none among ancient capitals, was due primarily to the genius of the race that exploited the newly formed country. The people were the Sumerians. Not that the Sumerians were the first to enter this land, but inasmuch as they were the first people in the region who had acquired the art of writing and of metal-working, so they were the first to develop the country intelligently.

They built cities and consolidated their new territory; they instructed their barbarous neighbors in the arts of metal-working, writing, and war; they reclaimed the adjacent desert from its primeval barrenness and applied the waters of the two rivers to their enrichment.

Finding a Whole New Realm

Seven years ago these Sumerians were a race known only to a handful of learned scholars whose lifetime task was deciphering their writings. Now the name is familiar to all intelligent laymen who keep abreast of ancient as well as modern discoveries.

But even to-day the real importance of the rediscovery of this ancient people is only beginning to dawn upon the thinking world. Could we but imagine that after several thousands of years the civilization of America would collapse under the stress of a series of tremendous catastrophes, and then completely disappear

A Defensive Purchase

This harbor is the reason for the islands now belonging to the United States. Denmark wished to sell, and the United States, to prevent this excellent naval base from falling into the hands of a European power, made the purchase. The price, $25,000,000, was the highest ever paid by this country in a territorial purchase.

The Virgin Islanders fell upon evil days economically after the transfer from Denmark to the United States, and many blamed the new owner for their troubles. For the most part, however, the difficulties arose from a prolonged drought and post-war hard times that were not confined to the Virgin Isles.

During the last few years economic conditions have become better, more shipping is putting in at St. Thomas, and the newly-made citizens are more contented. Sanitation has been greatly improved by the American officials and has shown results in a reduction of the death rate from 35.4 to 19.1 per thousand.

Bulletin No. 1, March 23, 1931.

Note: For up-to-date material and pictures of the Virgin Islands see "Skypaths through Latin America," in the January, 1931, issue of the *National Geographic Magazine*. Supplementary reading can be found in "Haunts of the Caribbean Corsairs," February, 1922, and "The Virgin Islands, an American Gibraltar," July, 1916.

© *National Geographic Society*

A ST. THOMAS VERSION OF A PANAMA HAT

These colorful but scratchy headgear are made by "Chachas," members of a small French colony forming part of the population of St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. They are called "Chachas" from an exclamation of annoyance they often use. They fish, weave hats, marry within their own group, and mingle hardly at all with the other people of the islands.

GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETIN

Published Weekly by

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

(Founded in 1888 for the Increase and Diffusion of Geographic Knowledge)

General Headquarters, Washington, D. C.

Man Wins a Battle with Insects

RULING a modern country is not wholly a matter of troops, police, laws, treaties and trade agents. Shock battalions of scientists may be required to combat enemies far more menacing than invading armies of men, or uprisings of aborigines.

In our own United States, for example, the fruit crop of the entire State of Florida was menaced in April 1929, when it was discovered that a dangerous insect called the Mediterranean fruit-fly was destroying the great groves upon which many of the people of Florida depend for a living. The Federal Government at once entered the fight against the pest. More than $6,000,000 was spent in the campaign, and 700 inspectors were employed to visit every farm in the State. No fruit could be shipped out of the State.

The result was a complete victory for the government and local forces. After examining 600,000 specimens of fruit between August 1 and November 1, 1930, it was decided that the ban on Florida fruit could be lifted. The victory is one of the major triumphs of man over the hosts of the insect world.

Fleeing before Flies

In other parts of the globe the fight is still a losing one, although some progress can be seen.

For example, in eastern Africa, the British recently captured 1,393 enemies in a day—dread insect enemies, tsetse flies, which were caught in eighteen imitation animal traps.

The tsetse fly, carrier of sleeping sickness, lives in the bush, and when an animal wanders into the bush and is infected by the insect, the natives flee the region just as they did before the swarms of the locusts of Bible times. Only, the tsetse fly is a much deadlier enemy than the locust. It has wiped out towns from extensive areas—areas in Tanganyika as large as California, and regions as extensive as other of our States in Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Uganda and Zululand.

Throughout these units of Britain's empire in Africa, cultivated patches of land have been abandoned, farms and pastures have gone back to the bush, and the tsetse fly resumes its jealous reign.

Insects That Fight Literacy

Insect pests are common to all continents—except the Antarctic—and they are found in even the most civilized modern cities. Witness the common house fly, and the cockroach. Their attack is not so direct as that of the jungle animal or the poisonous reptile, but it can be just as deadly. Some destroy food, others spread disease germs, or they attack the foods and animals which are of high property value to mankind.

The cockroach even assails man's culture and some of his most cherished institutions, by its appetite for the paste on book covers, and also for the paste used in the wall paper of his home. Sleeping sailors aboard ships, seamen relate, often wear gloves to thwart cockroaches that gnaw fingernails.

Flies Breed in Horse's Stomach

Go to a farm with a screened porch and kitchen, and your host may tell of the sudden death of his favorite mount. For a certain fly, the bot fly, likes to lay its eggs on the fore legs of a horse. The horse scratches its leg with its teeth, thus transferring the eggs to its mouth, ultimately swallows them, and they are hatched in the animal's stomach. There a disease sets in which is fatal to the horse.

The dealer in hides tells his tale of woe about the warble fly—the fly that bites animals and lowers the value of the hides; while the fig growers relate how the larvae of certain species of the moth have destroyed as high as a half of the world fig crop in a year.

Foliage of some varieties of the best shade trees have an unfortunate appeal to the tastes of the larvae of the gypsy moth, and it is some of that moth's cousins who rob apple growers, corn planters and flour millers of thousands of dollars annually.

How Mosquitos Affect Geography

Every vacationist knows—or should know—the peril of the mosquito. Europeans and Americans had to arm themselves with refrigeration and quinine before they could invade the Tropics. Quinine, because the major tropical enemy of the white man is the mosquito, dispersing its yellow fever and malarial germs. It has been said that quinine and sanitation enabled Americans to build the Panama Canal. And quinine is such an essential equipment of British rule in India that the postman is as ready to sell the bitter white powder as he is to dispense postage stamps.

from the memory of man, except in the vague remembrance of a few fabled traditions, we should have a parallel not so far removed from that of Sumer.

Seven Years of Work

When, after the World War, the opportunity came for excavation in Mesopotamia, England and the United States began the exploration, and seven years' work has yielded rich results.

Fresh light has been thrown on the dead city of Ur, and upon the peoples to whom the better-known empires, Assyria, Greece, and even Rome, owe their heritage, or background.

The lost site of Ur was identified in 1854 by the British consul at Basra, who discovered inscribed clay cylinders whereon a Babylonian king related his restoration of the ancient tower, the Ziggurat, about 550 B. C. Experts realized the significance of the find, but it was many years before readers of the Bible realized that Ur of the Chaldees, mentioned in the Book of Genesis as the home of Abraham, was to be indicated precisely on the map. The home of the great Jewish patriarch was thereby definitely proved to be no literary fiction, but a city to be ranked among the great capitals of the past.

Bulletin No. 2, March 23, 1931.

Note: See also in the *National Geographic Magazine*: "New Light on Ancient Ur," January, 1930; "Archeology, the Mirror of the Ages," August, 1928; "A Visit to Three Arab Kingdoms," May, 1923; and "Modern Scenes in the Cradle of Civilization," April, 1922.

© *National Geographic Society*

A BRIDGE OF BOATS ACROSS THE EUPHRATES

This floating roadway is eight miles to the east of ancient Ur, at An Nasiriya, the nearest inhabited town. In times of flood this bridge is often smashed to pieces and has to be almost completely rebuilt.

GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETIN

Published Weekly by

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

(Founded in 1888 for the Increase and Diffusion of Geographic Knowledge)

General Headquarters, Washington, D. C.

Byrd Thanks Schools and Tells of New Work

REAR ADMIRAL RICHARD E. BYRD expressed, in a gracious speech, his thanks and appreciation for the bound volumes of school children's letters, presented to him as a tribute at the Department of Superintendence Convention in Detroit, Michigan, February 23. In the course of his speech Admiral Byrd stated that the work connected with the Antarctic Expedition was by no means over, and that several of his men, in addition to himself, were still busy preparing reports of their scientific discoveries.

Admiral Byrd said, in part:

"I am deeply grateful for the honor you have bestowed upon me this evening—grateful for two reasons—because it represents your appreciation of the brave and loyal work of my entire command, and also because it betokens your realization, as educators, of the high value of exploring and studying scientifically the vast, mysterious wastes of the Antarctic Continent.

"All of us can recall the scant attention explorers got from the older types of textbooks, which dealt at great length with warriors, statesmen, and even political intrigue, but failed to tell of the men who helped add continents and oceans and remote islands to the cramped medieval maps.

"Though personally I do not feel worthy, I accept most gratefully and gladly this tribute of the school children of America, sponsored by you to whom their education is entrusted, not as a personal honor, but as a tribute to my entire command—a recognition that their courage, loyalty and persistence in pursuit of new geographic knowledge are valued at their full worth.

"Your approval of the work of our Antarctic Expedition has this further significance—it stimulates us while we are tackling some of the hardest work of the expedition—work which is in progress right now, and will continue for months to come.

"I refer to the tremendous task of compiling all our data, of putting on maps and in books—three or four books at least—the information we gained; the information that we hope makes our going worth all the sacrifice, and the splendid courage my men showed in their 14 months' stay in the world's loneliest land.

"I spent the summer hard at work on my book, and doing my part, though small it was, of charting the area we explored and the physical features we discovered, for the map the National Geographic Society will publish. This map, Dr. Grosvenor informs me, also will embody all other explorers' findings in Antarctica since that first American, Wilkes, went there just 90 years before we arrived.

"Senior Scientist Laurence Gould is recording and analyzing the discoveries of the rocks and glaciers—discoveries he made on the 1,300-mile trip with dog teams, the longest sledge trip ever made for purely geological purposes.

"Captain McKinley is assembling the map information recorded by the unerring eye of the aerial camera which filmed some 500,000 square miles of territory, 200,000 miles of which never before had been seen by the eye of man.

"William Haines, meteorologist, is making scientific sense of his daily, rather hourly, observations of temperatures, humidity and wind velocities in the land where the winds blow hardest and the temperature drops lowest. His findings will be of much value in helping southerly inhabited lands estimate the forces generating their weather which originate in the 'mother of weather.'

Many prosperous ports of Central America to-day, where ships load and unload, and airplanes come and go, owe their prosperity to the battle science has fought against the mosquito, which once kept away vessels and visitors as effectually as machine guns.

A Geographic Medley

A geographic medley of foreign insects join our own species in their onslaughts upon the United States. The boll weevil sneaked across the Rio Grande in 1892 and has since destroyed as many as 4,000,000 bales of cotton in a single year. Shade tree leaves and fruits tempt the palates of visiting Mexican bean beetles, the so-called bad girls of the lady bug family, and they have joined the boll weevil in the southern States.

The European corn borer found America a land flowing with corn, milk and honey in 1917. Now thousands of dollars worth of vegetables are devoured by the pest. The German contribution to our foreign insect enemies is the Hessian fly, that has been harassing American farmers since it arrived here in the straw mattresses of Hessian soldiers in colonial times.

A Japanese Invader

Meanwhile the Japanese beetle, which first invaded New Jersey farms several years ago, continues to increase the fortune already spent by the United States, State and county governments to keep it under control.

Grain growing regions of the world lose millions of dollars' worth of grain annually because of the Chinch bug. Destruction of 3,000,000 acres of vineyards by a member of the Chinch bug family several years ago, will long be remembered by French vineyardists.

The locust has no respect for geography. While one swarm is invading the East, another is swooping down on vegetation in the West. In 1874 and 1876 locusts destroyed millions of dollars' worth of agricultural products in their migration from Canada to Texas. Natives of Madagascar compensate for losses incurred by locust invasions by capturing quantities of the insects for their dinner tables.

Bulletin No. 3, March 23, 1931.

Note: The *National Geographic Magazine* offers clearly written and well illustrated material about insect life in: "Exploring the Wonders of the Insect World," and "Insect Rivals of the Rainbow," July, 1929; "Strange Habits of Familiar Moths and Butterflies," and "Where Our Moths and Butterflies Roam," July, 1927; and "Fighting Insects with Airplanes," March, 1922.

Photograph courtesy U. S. Dept. of Agriculture

A SCENE TAKEN WHEN THE FRUIT-FLY WAS DEVASTATING FLORIDA

After a long, hard battle the Federal Government has lifted the ban on shipments of fruit out of the State of Florida. The victory of science over the Mediterranean fruit-fly in this southern State marks one of the greatest triumphs of man over insects. The grove shown above again bears good, ripe fruit to grace the breakfast tables of the nation.

GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETIN

Published Weekly by

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

(Founded in 1888 for the Increase and Diffusion of Geographic Knowledge)

General Headquarters, Washington, D. C.

Clipperton Rock: France's Newest American Possession

GET OUT your maps of North America and search the blue of the Pacific Ocean off the Mexican coast until you locate Clipperton Rock. Here plant a tiny tricolor, for the island has just been awarded to France.

Clipperton Rock, France's first possession on the Pacific coast of North America, is a desolate spot of land 670 miles off the Mexican coast. It has been placed under the tricolor by King Victor Emanuel of Italy, to whom France and Mexico submitted their claims of ownership and agreed to abide by his decision.

Clipperton Rock is one of the loneliest and least visited islands on the globe. It is about the same distance from the nearest Mexican port of Acapulco (see illustration, next page) as the Bermuda Islands are from New York. Like the Bermudas this lonely island rises sheer from the bed of the ocean. It is surrounded by dangerous coral reefs.

Looks Like a Sail from a Distance

Mariners who have sailed near Clipperton Rock say that the island, which is about two miles in diameter and reaches a height of 60 feet, looks like a sail at a distance. Upon closer approach it presents the appearance of a castle rising from the waves.

Most ship captains give Clipperton Rock a wide berth. In fair weather it is easy enough to steer clear of its encircling reefs, but in times of fog a ship could be wrecked before the sounding lead could give any warning of land. Soundings less than a mile offshore give no bottom at 150 fathoms (900 feet).

The island, destitute of any vegetation, is inhabited only by a small Mexican garrison. It was annexed by France in 1857. A party of Americans next claimed it and attempted a settlement. When France protested to this country in 1897 the United States recognized the French claim. But the same year President Porfirio Diaz, of Mexico, seized the island. Later Diaz agreed to submit the matter to arbitration of the King of Italy and abide by his decision.

Possible Seaplane Base

While the sail-like rock is the most conspicuous feature of the island, most of the new French possession is a huge ring or belt of coral sand, inclosing a circular lagoon which varies in depth from a few inches to 300 feet. The lagoon water is brackish and during the dry season smells strongly of ammonia. It could be used, however, as a seaplane base, for at all times it affords a quiet anchorage and taking-off place.

Native food supplies are meager, insufficient in themselves to support human life. This was demonstrated about 12 years ago, when, during one of the acute periods of the Mexican revolutionary struggles, supplies could not be sent to Clipperton Rock. All the garrison there, with the exception of one man, died of starvation before a ship could be spared.

Sharks swim about the island, and in the big lagoon there are a number of knobs of land above water on which countless sea birds lay their eggs. These eggs are good eating.

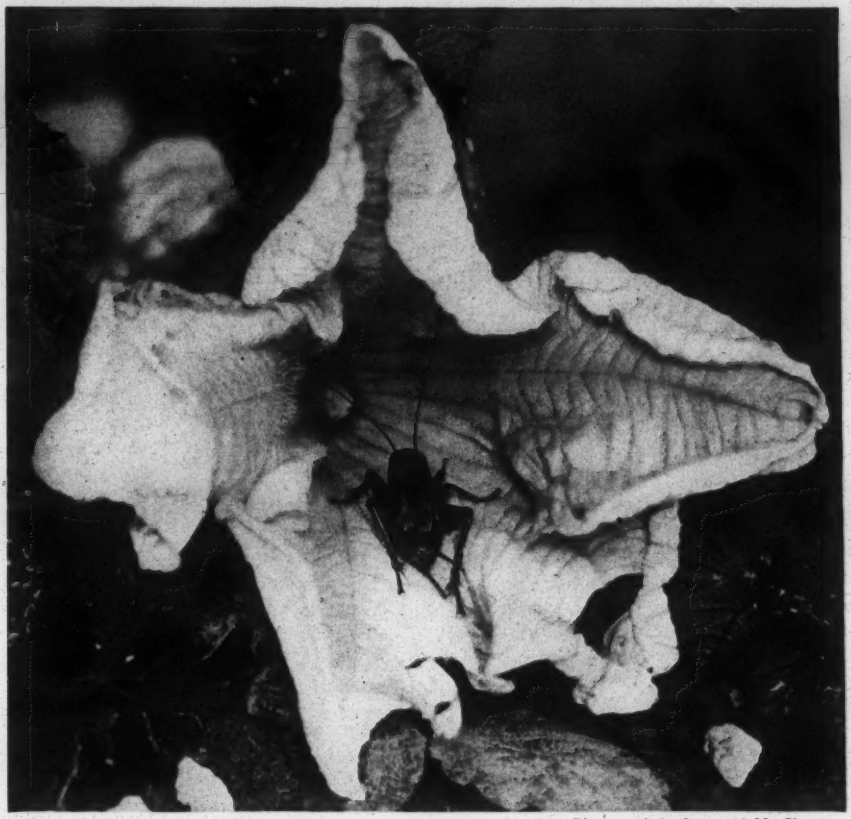
Some time ago the Mexican Government leased Clipperton Rock to the Pacific

"Malcolm Hanson, and Lloyd Berkner, are compiling the radio observations he made. Not only did we employ radio in communicating from one to another of the units of the expedition, and with America, but Hanson made valuable studies of the Heavyside layer and other phenomena which will be of use to all commercial radio transmission along ether paths which cut the higher latitudes.

"Henry Harrison is working upon problems of aerology. Frank T. Davis is computing data of physics, especially recordings of terrestrial magnetism, which add to the data that help pilot all the ships into all ports of the world. Quin Blackburn and Dr. Francis Coman are collating topographic findings of the Bay of Whales and in a very large area in this vicinity. Ten years from now this should give us some exact information on the movements and changes of the great barrier. Ralph Shropshire is working on the hydrographic results at the Buffalo museum.

"Dr. Coman is preparing his report on the biology of the seals, penguins and birds that sojourn by the icy waters which rim the continent, as well as the valuable studies of our diet and its effects upon us. Even the personnel of the expedition, you see, served as a laboratory for study, living as we did under highly specialized conditions."

Bulletin No. 4, March 23, 1931.



Photograph by Lynwood M. Chace

THE CRICKET'S LOUD SPEAKER—A PUMPKIN BLOSSOM

The cricket is one of the most familiar and most cheerful forms of insect life. While it takes its toll of plant life, it is by no means as destructive as its cousins the Japanese beetle, the fruit-fly, the boll weevil, etc. Read how Florida conquered the fruit-fly in Bulletin No. 3.

Islands Company, which expected to exploit the guano deposits of the bird breeding rocks. A wharf 400 feet long was built out to the edge of the reef, but, as the sea breaks beyond it, the wharf will have to be extended before ships can use it. The concession has not been operated since 1914.

The Mexican name for the island is "La Isla de la Pasion," or the Isle of the Passion.

Bulletin No. 5, March 23, 1931.

Note: Other French possessions in North America, the remnants of a once vast empire, are described in "Skypaths through Latin America," January, 1931, *National Geographic Magazine;* and "Fishes of Our North Atlantic Seaboard," December, 1923.

© *National Geographic Society*

GRIM SPANISH FORTIFICATIONS AT ACAPULCO, MEXICO

Acapulco has one of the best harbors on Mexico's rocky west coast. Here 100 ocean steamships and 200 lighter craft can find safe anchorage. Bret Harte, America's great writer of the West, in his "Last Galleon," sings of the day in 1641 when the regular yearly galleon was due in Acapulco, and the limes (green, lemonlike fruit) were ripening in the sun for the sick on board. Acapulco is the nearest port to Clipperton Rock, France's newly acquired Pacific coast possession (See Bulletin No. 5).